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Summer 2020

The ECHO Times

LIFE IS AN ECHO - WHAT YOU SEND OUT, YOU GET BACK!



The Journey Continues

By Karen Lisser, Executive Director
klisser@echojanesville.org

My journey is taking a new direction, after being at ECHO's helm for 25 years and 8 months. Many of you read the following on Facebook July 21:

Congratulations to Karen Lisser on her retirement! Karen will be retiring August 31 after more than twenty-five years of dedicated service as Executive Director of ECHO. Under Karen's leadership, ECHO has grown from a small grassroots organization started by local churches to an essential social service agency serving one in five residents in Janesville. Karen was instrumental in ECHO obtaining a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator for the last five years. Karen's commitment to the thousands of ECHO clients and her passion for the ECHO mission will be missed by all. Everyone in the ECHO organization wishes Karen the best in her retirement and all her future endeavors.

A celebration of my service to ECHO was announced in a Facebook post on July 26. It will be Thursday, August 27, 4-7 pm, at the JP Cullen Pavilion. Anna Marie Lux wrote an article about me that was in the Gazette Friday, July 24th. It was also linked in Facebook. I won't repeat what it said, so I hope you will read it. Many people shared these posts and a few hundred people responded. From the bottom of my heart, I thank all of you for your wonderful comments and support. There were so many posts, but I will share just one, from my son, Steve Lisser, who was 12 when I started at ECHO:

Great job, Mom! I am so proud of you for making ECHO what it is today. Over the last 25 years, I have watched the ECHO organization grow drastically, because of your leadership, hard work, and tireless dedication. The community has been immensely lucky to have you as an advocate and leader. You have inspired and touched so many people's lives. I love you!

Planning for my future, when that future feels uncertain, is stressful. I'm focusing on the positive for ECHO and myself. The comments from a few hundred people help tremendously. I don't usually focus on myself in these newsletter columns, but I was told that this is my opportunity to do that.

I spent over 25 years growing ECHO from one employee (myself) to 16 employees, some full-time and some part-time. I worked on expanding all of ECHO's programs, but significantly developed the Housing Programs (Rent & Mortgage Assistance, Lodging for Homeless), and expanding the Food program. My core beliefs that you've heard me say before: *Everyone Deserves a Home and Food on their Table.*

An excerpt from my column the summer of 2009:

The most important work we will ever do will be within the walls of our own homes. I asked a few staff to finish the following sentence: *Having a place to call home is _____.* Answers included: *important; security; comfort; your base, your foundation; gives you a sense of belonging; affects all other things; I can't imagine not going home; opening the refrigerator & fixing a meal, seeing my pets – we're blessed to have homes.*

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Continuing: Having a place to call home is the place that everything else begins. Take a moment to think about your home when you were growing up. I remember what it was like in my home when I was a child. We went through good times and bad times, some tragic. I always knew that my parents loved me (and my brother and sister, and 30 foster babies), and although we didn't have a lot of money, there was always food on the table. Imagine losing your housing. It can be a terrifying time. Most of ECHO's clients are either at risk of homelessness or are homeless.

I focused on programs that fit the community needs and worked to keep that momentum going through today. We work hard at trying to prevent homelessness, and if it occurs, to shorten the time of homelessness and get people into stable housing through ECHO's lodging and rent programs.

One of my experiences that people still comment on is when I went undercover in the late 90s, changed my appearance and became homeless for three days and two nights. I stayed at two different lodging places and visited a third one that wouldn't let me stay (it was just for men). I went all over the city, and no one recognized me, not even the ECHO staff. The experience generated changes at our agency and in the community, that I am proud of. People remind me that it is an example of my dedication to clients and the community.

I helped start other agencies, to help serve community needs. One of the first examples is House of Mercy. I was one of the founders and was honored to cut the ribbon with Javon Bea when it opened. I helped with the formation of Project 16:49 and am pleased to have been on the committee that hired Tammy DeGarmo, who is doing an excellent job as Executive Director. I have been on numerous community committees, including a couple that evolved into the formation of the Homeless Intervention Task Force, our area continuum of care. The most recent committee I'm a part of is FOCUS, or Finding Opportunities to Collaborate and Unite Services, which started two years ago, led by our City Manager, Mark Freitag. Mark does a superb job collaborating with all of us who serve people experiencing homelessness.

Some of my favorite things at ECHO included:

Working with great staff. They are compassionate and skilled, to name just two of their many attributes. I will significantly miss working with them. I can't say enough about what they have done to continue all of our services during this pandemic. Their resilience in implementing a COVID operating plan has been exemplary.

Seeing clients leave ECHO with grateful smiles on their faces.

Working with other community leaders on addressing food insecurity and stabilizing housing, as well as meeting other basic needs.

The incredible support of this community – donors, volunteers. Your support is our lifeblood.

Now that I am retiring from ECHO, I will take an unstructured hiatus before starting a new chapter in my career. I will spend more time with my family - my husband, Rob, and our son and daughter-in-law, Steve and Emily, who live in Baraboo. I will reflect. It's hard to decide what's next.

I still have a lot to give the community. I'm going to be opening a new chapter. I find it fulfilling to work with people. I'm not sure what that will entail yet.

Some of my indecision is due to COVID and its effect on the job market. I'm navigating with uncertainty, but I'm not done yet. I have lots of thoughts, but they are fluid right now.

Staff and other people have told me that I'm always so passionate and committed to ECHO and always gave a strong positive message. I loved the work I did, so it was easy to do that. I have a small wooden plaque right in front of me on my desk at ECHO, that quotes Maya Angelou – ***I believe you can only be great at something you love.***

I love working at ECHO, and people tell me I have done a good job. I've gotten many awards, including Woman of Distinction from the YW and Excellence in Advocacy Award from the United Way Blackhawk Region, to name two. I've gotten letters of recognition from legislators and local leaders and frequent notes from people in the community. I appreciate all of them and all of you.

Thank You for all the support in the community. It made all the work worthwhile. I look forward to continuing to contribute to this community and see all of you out and about.

*Cheers
to 25+ years!*

A RETIREMENT OPEN HOUSE TO HONOR
KAREN LISSER

THURSDAY
AUG 27

JP CULLEN
MEMORIAL PAVILION
W COURT ST & S RIVER ST

4:00 TO
7:00PM

**REDUCE
REUSE
RECYCLE**

**ECHO NEEDS YOUR
LARGE BROWN PAPER BAGS,
PLASTIC BAGS, TWIST TIES
& PLASTIC BOTTLES**

Drop them off at ECHO
Mon.-Fri. 9am-Noon ,
or Mon.-Thur. 1-4pm

President's Message
By Nancy Hansen-Bennett



ECHO has had to change many ways of doing "normal activities" since the pandemic hit us back in March. I am so proud of our incredible staff and faithful volunteers who have taken on many challenges successfully. We are meeting each need with available resources and making referrals where necessary. It is truly a blessing for me to be part of ECHO. Thanks, Karen, for your 25 years as our executive director. Thanks and praise!

Thank You!

Eat Out for Hunger

Thank you to our 2020 Eat Out for Hunger participating restaurants: 29 South Café, Charlie's Place, Citrus Café, Culvers - Court St, Drafthouse, Hammy's Roadside Bar, Mac's Pizza Shack, My Apartment Pub & Grill, Panda Garden, and Sandee's Thai Fusion.

**ECHO assists clients with fans
to keep cool in warm weather.**

In 2019, 104 clients received fans and this year 48 clients have already asked for a fan to help keep them cool.



[www.facebook.com/
ECHOJanesville](http://www.facebook.com/ECHOJanesville)

to find out more about what is going on at ECHO in real time.



“McBuddies” School Supply Program



**Please drop off school supply donations
at the ECHO Office - 65 S. High St.
Monday-Friday, 8am-12pm or Monday-Thursday, 1pm-4pm**



Volunteers Needed

**For set-up Mon. 8/17 through Thurs. 8/20 and
for the school supply distribution on Fri. 8/21**

**Please call Fran at the ECHO Office at
608-754-5333 for more info and to sign up!**

SCHOOL SUPPLIES NEEDED

**Crayons (24 pack)
Glue & Glue Sticks
Watercolors
3-Ring Binders
Scissors
Pencils & Colored Pencils
Pens (Black, Blue & Red)
Markers & Dry Erase Markers
Highlighters
Black Sharpie Markers**

**Supply Box/Bag
Erasers (pink & pencil top)
Pencil Sharpener with cover
Spiral Notebooks (wide & college ruled)
Notebook Paper (wide & college ruled)
Scientific Calculators
Pocket folders
Ear Buds/Phones
Backpacks
Disinfecting Wipes**

This year we will be doing things a little differently due to COVID-19. Sign up began on July 6th and will end August 17. We will be prepacking all the school supplies and distributing the school supplies to each family via a drive-thru distribution to minimize contact. We are very lucky to have two of our member churches providing the packing (St. John Lutheran) and distribution (St. John Vianney) sites.

We would like to thank you all in advance for supporting this program.



Hi everybody! I've really been enjoying interning at ECHO both as a way to finish my Bachelor's in Social Work at UW Whitewater and also to do fulfilling and meaningful work in my home community. I'm hoping to eventually earn my Master's with a focus in either community practice or social welfare policy. I have heard of ECHO programs through volunteering at Edgerton Outreach, working for KANDU Industries, and many of the fundraisers that they put on, which is what attracted me to the agency.

Seeing the challenges that others who aren't very different from me face and hearing about their experiences is what keeps me interested in social work. Everybody has stories worth hearing. The pandemic has presented some unique circumstances for a field placement, so I am thankful to have such wonderful faculty to support my learning through this experience.

EVERYONE COOPERATING TO HELP OTHERS

ECHO's mission is dedicated to meeting housing, food and other basic human needs and addressing the barriers to self-sufficiency.

Volunteer Take 5

Name: Heather Miller

How long have you volunteered at ECHO? I have been a volunteer for 17 years.

How did you get involved at ECHO? Back in 1997, I answered an ad looking for volunteers to help at the food pantry in the basement of Trinity Episcopal Church. I met Marge Sell and have been here ever since.

What do you currently do at ECHO? Currently, I am distributing Senior Stockboxes in the afternoon.

What is your favorite thing about ECHO? My favorite thing about ECHO is the diversity of the hand-up that we provide. Seeing first-hand how much (of what you do) is appreciated makes my heart happy.

What is one thing about ECHO that surprised you when you started volunteering? Certainly the number of households and families we help is amazing, but the commitment of so many people, businesses, vendors, churches, and volunteers who work together toward a common goal of bettering our community is extraordinary.



Summer Fund Drive

We need your help in reaching our goal to better serve families here, **in our community**, in need of housing, shelter, food, clothing, and other necessities that no one should be without. Please make a donation that will help families in need.



The options are endless and so is the need.

Can you help by donating to ECHO to assist in paying for items and many not mentioned below?

- \$ 20 – Gas so someone can go to work.
- \$ 52 – Monthly bus pass to get someone to work.
- \$ 80 – 1 week of groceries for a family in need.
- \$250 – 1 week of lodging for a homeless family.
- \$750 – 1 month rent to prevent a family from becoming homeless.

Life is an ECHO — what you send out, you get back!

Please make checks payable to ECHO and send to ECHO, 65 S. High St., Janesville, WI 53548

To pay by credit card, call 608-754-5333 or visit www.echojanesville.org

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone #: _____ E-Mail: _____



Adopt a Family Sign-Up Begins

ECHO is again looking forward to assisting low-income families in need this year through our Adopt A Family program. Donors are asked to consider adopting one or more families to help provide hope and joy during the holiday season.

Families that are served by ECHO are on limited incomes and struggle to afford their basic needs, such as rent, electricity, transportation, and food. The holiday season can bring on even more stress to a family, adding extra expenses to the budget. Without the benefit of charitable programs, many families would not be able to have the pleasure of seeing their children's excitement about having gifts under the Christmas tree.

Families are picked randomly by the ECHO staff, then given a "wish list" to complete. Items include clothing, toys, and household necessities. Once a "wish list" is completed, it is assigned a family number and matched to a donor. Donors receive the list with first names, ages, and any other relevant information needed to be able to purchase gifts for their chosen family. ECHO asks that 2-3 gifts are bought per family member, and donors only adopt a family that fits within their own budget. To adopt a family, please contact Jessica Locher at 754-5333 or jlocher@echojanesville.org by Mon., November 16 to receive your family's wish list for Black Friday shopping.

ECHO, as well as the families who have participated in the Adopt A Family program, greatly appreciate all the individuals and organizations that have generously adopted a family in years past. We are looking forward to working with you again and making this holiday season a memorable one for many families.



In Memoriam:

Since our last newsletter, we received contributions *in memory* of the following ECHO friends. Their families and friends are in our thoughts and prayers.

Evelyn Alwin
Evelyn Anderson
Virginia & Gregory Anderson
Jack Biddick
Tom Cornelius
Kim Davis Givhan
Marjorie Durner
Berenice Ellis
Barbara Emert

James Everett
Donald Gilbert Jr.
Walt Golbuff
Marian Halverson
Darrell Hart
Leona Jones
Catherine Larson
Eugene Nelson
Mabel Phillips

Jordan Roxbury
John Sattel
Evelyn Schwartz
Lurna Smith
Ginny Spors
Don & Ellinor Streicher
Sheila Tabbert
Tom Upham
Donald Williams

In Honor:

We join the families and friends in congratulating the following ECHO friends who were *honored* by donations in celebration of their birthday, anniversary, or special occasion.

Karen Bohn
Coextruded Plastic Technologies
Brent Cullen
Jason Cullen
Ryan Cullen

Barbara DuBois
Betty Gilbert, 88th Birthday
Janice Hancock
Sue McCrone
Rock County Land Records

We thank you all for thinking of ECHO!

Memorial and honorarium card packets are available at the ECHO office or through participating churches. Each packet contains:

1. An ECHO information sheet and envelope for you to mail or bring in your donation to ECHO.
2. A postcard to send to the person or family to let them know that a donation was made to ECHO in honor or memory of the person you are remembering.
3. Checks may be made payable to ECHO, Inc.
(Your gift is tax deductible as allowed by law.)

Food and Fund Drives

Special thanks to the following businesses and organizations that held food, fund and other drives:

A & H Trucking
Advia Credit Union
All Saints Church
Asbury United Methodist Church
Best Events
Bimbo Bakeries USA
Birds Eye
Blackhawk Community Credit Union
Brownberry Bread
Butternut Bakery
Cargill United Methodist Church
Catholic Charities
Chambers & Owen
Country Quality Dairy
Crystal Farms
Daniels Sentry Food Stores
Data Dimensions
Dollar General
Dunkin' Donuts
E & D Water Works
Emerald Grove UCC
Faith Lutheran Church
Festival Foods
First Christian Church
First Congregational Church
First Lutheran
First Presbyterian Church
Gardner Bakery
Girl Scouts
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Hedberg Public Library
Hendricks Properties
Hormel
Hunger Task Force - Milwaukee
Jay's Big Rolls
Jones Dairy Farm
Kentucky Fried Chicken

Kwik Trip
Little Debbie
MacFarlane Pheasant Farm
Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church
Mt. Zion United Methodist Church
Nativity of Mary Catholic Church and School
New Life Assembly of God/Convoy of Hope
NHA-WIC
Olive Garden
Peace Lutheran Church
Pepsi
Riverplace Senior Housing
Rock Prairie Presbyterian
St. John Lutheran Church
St. John Vianney Church
St. Mark's Lutheran Church
St. Mary's Hospital, Janesville
St. Matthew's Lutheran Church
St. Patrick Catholic Church
St. Paul Lutheran Church
St. Peter's Lutheran Church
St. William Catholic Church
Sam's Club
Schnucks
Seneca Foods
Starbucks
Tree House Foods
Trinity Episcopal Church



**ECHO is seeking volunteers
for the Fundraising Committee.**
**Contact Jessica at jlocher@echojanesville.org
for more information about joining the
ECHO Fundraising Committee.**



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ECHO Calendar of Events

- ◆ **8/21 School Supply Distribution**
- ◆ **8/27 Karen's Retirement Open House**
- ◆ **10/24 Empty Bowls To Go Fundraiser**
- ◆ **11/21 Thanksgiving Basket Distribution**

For more information about these events, visit www.echojanesville.org

ECHO Needs

Soup and Crackers	Canned Meats
Mac & Cheese	Instant Coffee
Cereal	Feminine Supplies
Peanut Butter & Jelly	Toilet Paper
	Diapers
	Deodorant



COVID-19 Style Fundraiser to support ECHO, fighting to end hunger in Janesville with hand-made soups from local restaurants.

Soups by: To Be Announced September 1, 2020

Soups will be pre-sold in quart freezer-safe containers. Orders will be taken starting 9/1/20 at noon until sold out.

Pricing: \$8 per quart or 3 quarts for \$20.

Pickup will be done as a drive-thru at YMCA of Northern Rock County's back parking lot off of Court Street on October 24 from 11:00am to 1:00pm.

